

the invaluable ones: best friends

by riouu

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Summary: Reality is harsh and people can be cruel, and Oikawa has his first meeting with both. Luckily, he has Iwaizumi to pick up his pieces, put him back together, and assure him things will be all right. Iwaizumi/Oikawa. Some violence.

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****Title:** the invaluable ones: best friends**

****Author:** riou**

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****Fandom:** Haikyuu!**

****Pairing:** Iwaizumi Hajime/Oikawa Tooru.**

****Warnings:** Bullying and violence, angst(?), curses and derogatory terms. For emetophobics: there is a sentence where he throws up so um, be careful.**

****Summary:** Reality is harsh and people can be cruel, and Oikawa has his first meeting with both. Luckily, he has Iwaizumi to pick up his pieces, put him back together, and assure him things will be all right.**

****Written:** 05-06 April 2013.**

****Foreword:****

This is typical for me: debuting into the world of Haikyuu fanfiction with a fic that is not only angsty and kinda violent, but also features an awkward title. I favour the first and am horrendously bad at correcting the latter. This fic is also a good indication of what is likely to come because I don't tend to write 100% happy things, even when it comes to adorable volleyball babes. In true author

fashion, I like to torture characters a little bit (sometimes a lot).

P.S. apologies for typos/terrible grammar/etc.

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><p>the invaluable ones: best friends;

(_For when everything in Oikawa's world falls apart, there is always Iwaizumi Hajime to fix it._)

It is 11:21pm and Oikawa Tooru is learning that there are, in fact, terrible people everywhere in the world. Everywhere, beyond those nationalised, viewed on television or in the papers where their photographic stills are merely empty, detached faces. They are but images on a screen and all the horror they create feels alien and distant, separated by miles upon miles, dividing country lines, and affecting lives he is not a part of and will never be a part of. Until it impacts directly on his own life, it is easy to ignore, to forget, to turn a blind eye. In reality, there are terrible people all around, in all walks of life, and some are much closer than he could ever have imagined.

(Oikawa thinks of how ignorant humans can be as he stares down those opposite him, and right now he feels the most ignorant of all.)

Case in point: three sour-faced teenagers standing before him in Aobajousai uniform, and as such they are both strangers and familiar all at once. It's the fact that he knows them which makes this unexpected encounter all the more striking to Oikawa—and all the more frightening, too. He will not easily forget the ever-present closeness of danger or how it can hide in the most unassuming forms, nor how such simple, petty, and entirely accidental things can twist and drive a person to commit violent acts against another. It will haunt him, this scene, creeping up on him in the dead of night when the streetlights flicker and he is all alone - and even when he is not, when he is surrounded by people and laughing, it will catch him unawares and he will abruptly go silent, softly shaken by the residual memory.

In truth, he does not _really_ know these boys - they are all in his year but not in his class and Oikawa cannot recall ever having spoken to them, so he only knows them by their family names. Sagami is on the left, Tousaka on the right, and in the middle, cracking his knuckles, is Ishinoaki. It is a somewhat intimidating picture, especially when coupled with the fact that they are all a good three inches taller than Oikawa and he is vastly outnumbered in what appears to be, as he has deduced, a confrontational situation. They are not known for their bad nature, are not a gang but a trio of genuine friends. They do not stick out at all, in fact: regular students with no remarkable features or abilities or grades, who pass by in the background noise, who no one ever really thinks much of or has reason to notice. Perhaps this is how they managed to corner him here in this dank little alleyway, Oikawa thinks - he did not see them until they stepped in to block his path. He wonders if they are simply jealous of the rather more extravagant high school life he leads, for he is anything but a wallflower, friendly with many girls and classmates, and a prominent star of their volleyball team. Maybe they mistook his geniality and playful nature for arrogance and an

inflated ego, his hard work for genius.

He frowns at that thought in particular and murmurs aloud, "But I'm no genius!"

"Shut up," Ishinoaki hisses, and it takes Oikawa another second to realise that the sudden stinging sensation of his cheek stems from the vicious slap he just received from the other boy. "You make me sick, you know that?" continues Ishinoaki as anger rises steadily in his voice, growing unchecked. Oikawa judges him to be The Hotheaded One. "Always talking about yourself, strutting about school like you own the place and treating everyone else like they're beneath you."

Oikawa pulls a bemused face at him while rubbing his sore cheek. He does not do any of these things and he says as much, and this time he earns himself an actual punch for it. It is not thrown with too much force but he stumbles all the same, finding his back pressed to the wall. Uneasiness grows in him. A sharp intake of breath sends knives of cool night air through his lungs. His jaw aches from the blow; a dull, throbbing pain that warns of further trouble to come should he not find a way out of this messy situation. He quietly considers changing his tone next time he speaks, because apparently they aren't going to tolerate his more easy-going nature.

"You know, the girl I love turned me down when I confessed the other day. Why? Because of you. You're all she has eyes for and you lead her on constantly, and it's disgusting. Chiaki deserves a better man than you."

Wisely, Oikawa does not voice the opinion that he's certain Chiaki would be better off without someone who beats up others over failed confessions and high school crushes. He also refrains from making the retort, "And why exactly is this my problem?" He flattens himself to the grimy wall, the stone rough against the palms of his hands. "I don't even know this Chiaki you're talking about," he offers back seriously, and this is mostly the truth, because the setter can't pin a face to the name but he thinks he might know Chiaki by her surname, if they have met before.

He regrets this admission quite quickly as Ishinoaki delivers another punch, this one fiercer and stronger than the last as his anger swells out of control like an overinflated balloon. Oikawa slumps so Tousaka grabs him by his right shoulder and hauls him back up, holding him in place with firm hands. The fear intensifies at this contact and Oikawa dimly notices the way his own hands are trembling, but he tries to hide this from his assailants by stuffing them into his pockets. "You bastard!" Ishinoaki shouts into his face, cruelly pinching fingers at Oikawa's chin and tilting his head up to meet his gaze, while simultaneously dousing him with flecks of spittle. "That's what makes you so despicable - all those girls and none of them mean a thing to you! You don't remember them beyond what pleasure you can take from them, you filthy!"

For the third time the fist meets his body and Oikawa's knees buckle dangerously from the impact. He hears Ishinoaki call him a slut and the word is amplified a hundredfold by the ringing in his ears, which he can't seem to shake off. He tries to protest that he is anything but, because he is. In all his seventeen years, Oikawa has never actually experienced any form of sex or foreplay - nothing beyond the

occasional kiss, and even these are relatively innocent compared to the full-on tonsil sucking that seems to go on amongst some of the couples in his year. Sure, he may have joked once or twice about the action he's getting, but the reality is that Oikawa is somewhat cagey about sexual contact and reluctant to dive right in with just anyone. (He is vaguely aware that he has an excuse _for_ this, but has yet to unravel the subconscious reasoning behind it.)

The scene right here is a reality, too, and it is a harsh one. Here he is, caught by three fellow young males who feel he is a threat to their basal needs and rights, to their impulsive desires to find girl, mate with girl, and pass on genes. They may disguise their instinct with claims of love but in Oikawa's eyes, people like this are not capable of love; only of feeling its fleeting shadow. He might almost laugh at the absurdity of all this, but he thinks the ache in his jaw might worsen if he does.

"Let's just do this and go before someone sees us," Sagami whispers hurriedly, cutting through the veil of Oikawa's pain and the absent thoughts he had dwelt on over the past moment or two. "You're making too much noise, Aki - someone's going to come along eventually." And this is all it takes. Tousaka's gruff agreement follows, Ishinoaki nods, and then they strike.

It is 11:24pm and Oikawa retches when Ishinoaki digs his knee into his abdomen, crushing the delicate organs within until he is forced to bring up his dinner in awful, shuddering gags. He is soon bruised and battered, and he gives up on trying to fight back after his fist connects with Sagami's face and the response is threefold. Somehow, his nose is not broken. The trio rush their beating of him, as frightened as they are irrationally furious, not wanting to be caught in the act - he supposes he can't blame them for that, because who would want to be caught doing something like this? Despite the fact that they are clearly scared, Oikawa is more so, and his fear is not lessened in the slightest by their own. As their limbs bruise his and Tousaka pulls roughly at his hair, he catches himself wondering, _Am I going to die?_

He is not sure how long they continue to hit him. It is only when the shrill wail of a police siren sounds from far too close, as a patrol car rushes down a nearby street en route to a crime scene, that they finally lose their nerve and drop him to the ground, turning tail and racing away into the night. Oikawa crumples over on his side, dazed and fading, losing focus on the world here and there and too dizzy to be worried about it. Once the ringing in his head has calmed slightly and his thoughts are somewhat less sluggish, he works to settle his heavy breathing and tactfully ignores the wet trickle of blood down the side of his face. The trauma of what happened and the relief of what did not happen sets in, a nasty, poisonous tonic of conflicted emotions. He gropes at cold, wet ground, grateful to be alive, and horrified at what just occurred. He cries. With each gasping sob, he comes apart a little more and succumbs to distress, curling in on himself, clinging to any security he can find between wall and pavement. Alone in the alleyway, the careless happiness of his school days seems that much further away, and it makes Oikawa sick to think about it.

There is something cold against his cheek, helping to soothe the soreness in his face slightly, and he only remembers through this chilly contact why he's even out so late in the first place. He has a

responsibility to let Iwaizumi know that he won't be returning to his friend's house with drinks from the grocery store and is just going to go home instead, that he remembered he had something important to do and now can't stay the night. It is a bad lie and Oikawa feels guilt coil tight in the pit of his stomach at the notion of betraying and abandoning his best friend like this, but he does not think he can face Iwaizumi now, not with blood on his face and bruised, broken skin.

His phone has, remarkably, survived the fight and is in much better condition than he is. Oikawa's hands are trembling so much that typing the correct words is an excruciatingly difficult task, but he manages the message, and he manages to hit send. The response is fast and his stomach churns a bit more.

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_**From:**_ Iwa-chan_  
><em><strong>Time:<strong>_ 23:31_  
><em><strong>Subject:<strong>_ RE: s orry_  
><em>What? Where are you?<em>
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Oikawa does not answer it and moves the bag of cold drinks out from underneath him instead. A minute later, the phone is singing his ringtone again; a depressedly cheerful tune in stark contrast to the alley. Another message comes through. _Seriously, idiot. And you've left your bag here, so at least come back and get it first._

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_**To:**_ Iwa-chan_  
><em><strong>Time:<strong>_ 23:34_  
><em><strong>Subject:<strong>_ RE: don't ignore me, Kusokawa_  
  
><em>I rly have to get that th ing dne Iwa-c han. I'll gte it  
tmrw.<em>
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His errors have Oikawa squirming uncomfortably but, with the way his fingers are shaking, fixing them would take too long and too much effort he does not currently have. He flips his phone shut, stuffs it back into his pocket, ignores it when it begins to ring, and pushes his hands beneath him. Slowly but surely, and with many a wince and whine, he drags himself up from the ground. The alleyway wavers around him and Oikawa stumbles, disorientated, his vision blurring dangerously - the faculties of sight clearly do not cope well with repeated blows to the head. He almost falls again and collapses heavily against the wall, using its bulk as a strong, steady support as he begins to try and make his way back home.

He is out of the alley but only a few hundred metres down an adjacent street when Iwaizumi Hajime finds him. It is 11:45pm, and Oikawa can taste blood in his mouth. He does not know if he should be frightened of his friend or not, but he is, and he hates that he is.

Predictably, any irritation Iwaizumi might have harboured for his abrupt decision to go home promptly evaporates at the sight of him, replaced instead by a look of immense concern. Oikawa attempts to shy away and hide, feeling stupid for doing so but unable to stop himself at the same time. He refuses to meet his eyes or go with him so Iwaizumi meets this stubbornness head on with his ownâ€|and Oikawa reluctantly yields to it, because his friend is a much more hard-headed thing than he is, and Oikawa is exhausted and just wants

to get off the street. Idle observation has noted that Iwaizumi does not have his bag with him, making it clear he was determined to bring him back even before he found him like this.

He allows the other to take him by the arm and lead him home, not to his own house but to Iwaizumi's, which is closer and also where his things are. For some reason he cannot seem to figure out, Oikawa apologises for the dents in their drink cans and the torn plastic bag he's carrying them in. He thinks Iwaizumi might have kicked him for this at any other time, were he not in his current state. Instead he gets a short, "It's fine, we can still drink them," and, although the words are distinctly tight and terse, he can only read the worry in the tone of his friend's voice.

When they get inside, placing the front door and exterior walls of the Iwaizumi residence between themselves and the rest of the world, Oikawa is much safer and feeling far less vulnerable than he did out in the open. Iwaizumi takes him straight upstairs to his room, sits him down on the bed, then leaves to fetch the first aid kit and water. He comes back and Oikawa flinches at his sudden reappearance. He sees hurt flash in Iwaizumi's dark eyes and opens his mouth to apologise, but his friend shakes his head in understanding and carefully closes the bedroom door. Kneeling on the floor in front of the bed, he sets the bowl and box at his side.

Oikawa murmurs so faintly, "Iwa-chanâ€¦"

"What? Are you scared I'll hurt you?" There is something almost accusatory in the undertone, even as Iwaizumi reaches up, tentative fingers brushing Oikawa's wrists, his shoulders, his hair. _ So many bruises_, Oikawa thinks as he stares down at his own bare arms, keeping still. _I look like I fell down a flight of stairs. _"I won't," Iwaizumi says when he does not reply, and the words are softer this time.

"But you do. You throw balls at me, and you kick me."

"Only when you're being an insufferable idiot. I wouldn't hurt you like this. Never." The sincerity is clear and solid and Oikawa crumbles in the face of it, even as Iwaizumi's voice wavers unintentionally, thick with emotion. Though he tries to stop the flood, Oikawa begins to cry again, tears tracing shining tracks through the dirt and blood on his cheeks. He whispers another apology in a pitiful whimper - instantly, Iwaizumi is leaning up to wrap his arms around him, to tug him forward slightly until the setter's forehead rests against his shoulder. "It's all right. Okay? Just trust me."

Oikawa is not sure what to think of that but the gesture of comfort makes him cry all the harder, and he clings tightly to the back of Iwaizumi's jacket for a good few minutes while stifling sobs in his shirt. No words are spoken right then even though Oikawa wants to admit to him how scared he was, just for the sake of saying it, to get it off his chest and cry it out of him before it can eat away at him even more. He thinks Iwaizumi hears it anyway, because he feels the circle of his arms tighten fractionally around him. Oikawa's body is wracked with each intake of breath, each shiver, and Iwaizumi takes it all without complaint, only threading his fingers in his hair and resting his chin atop his head, staying close as if he knows well the simple, necessary reassurance Oikawa is taking from his

presence. Perhaps he really does, for he only pulls away after Oikawa does, once his breathing is back under control. Iwaizumi rummages in a pocket and produces a clean tissue which he uses to help dry his friend's face and, after dipping it in the bowl of water, clean some of the blood away. "Tilt your head back a bit," he tells him and pushes Oikawa's hair up out of the way, inspecting the most pressing injury at hand - the one to his head which is bleeding profusely all down the left side of his face. "I think it's not actually that bad, just bleeding a lot. It doesn't look deep, thankfully. You've grazed it all down the side of your cheek too though," mutters Iwaizumi, pressing the wet tissue to the shallow cut. Oikawa winces and is soothed softly.

Then he asks what happened. Oikawa does not flinch again but he does still and stiffen up visibly. He averts his gaze in an unspoken indication that he does not wish to talk about it, but Iwaizumi is having none of that. "I swear, if you don't tell me how the hell you ended up like this, I'm not letting you play in the next match."

"But I'm team captain," Oikawa grumbles back childishly, pouting just a touch at him. He gets a deep frown for it. Iwaizumi moves on to tending the exposed cuts and scrapes on his legs, which Oikawa might have saved himself from had he changed out of his shorts earlier, and the Seijou captain settles back a bit on the bed, silent. After a long, expectant pause, he grudgingly begins to explain what happened in the alleyway. The words come out hesitant and he can't quite temper the slight tremor in his voice - soon he is rushing each sentence as it comes, as though afraid someone will overhear him. Gradually, as each snippet of information is given and the story unfolds, Iwaizumi also ceases moving, a hand and tissue suspended midway to another cut as he stares wide-eyed at Oikawa. The expression on his face is one of total and utter disgust, but Oikawa is smart enough to understand it is not directed at him.

Finally, Iwaizumi swears loudly, angrily, and throws down the bloody tissue. "Who was it?" Oikawa did not specify names and he seems determined to find out, but the setter shakes his head vigorously - a motion he immediately regrets as the bedroom tips and Iwaizumi curses again, steadying him with a concerned, "Don't do that when you're bleeding out your head, idiot!"

Oikawa mumbles something and even he is not sure what it is, but he thinks it might have been, "M'fine." Holding his own head in his hands, he blinks down at Iwaizumi. "I don't want you getting into trouble," he manages.

"I wouldn't."

"You so would, you're bad at thinking before you act. I don't want that to happen."

Iwaizumi huffs and Oikawa thinks he looks like he's resisting the urge to smack him upside the head like he usually does. "How about you worry about yourself and not me, huh? Mister Cut n' Bloody."

Despite how it makes his cheeks ache in an unpleasant way as the bruised skin is drawn taut, Oikawa smiles at him. Smiling is always easier around Iwaizumi, even if it hurts. "But I have you to do that

for me, Iwa-chan."

"You're an idiot. A dumbass. Kusokawa." Finished patching up his minor leg injuries, Iwaizumi's hands find a square of gauze and he nudges Oikawa until he reaches to hold his own hair out of the way, placing the material over that cut on his head and securing it in place with medical tape. Oikawa is staring across the room, thinking of nothing and seeing little, when the sensation of fingers brushing his own startles him into looking back around. Iwaizumi is studiously focused on nothing but cleaning the dirt off of his hands and out of the cuts on his palms, but even once he's done, he does not let go. Oikawa waits for him to say something, receives nothing, and cants his head in curiosity. He ends up smiling again when Iwaizumi takes his hands in his own, carefully, holding them differently this time and offering a subtle squeeze - he is not patching up physical wounds but trying to help with internal ones, and something about his awkward, embarrassed expression stirs up a warmth in Oikawa's heart.

Iwaizumi is holding his hands and there is a redness in his cheeks, and Oikawa tries to memorise it all at once. "You should take a bath," says Iwaizumi at last, after clearing his throat. "I'll go run one, so hurry up and get out of your dirty clothes. I'll toss them in the wash, too, though I'm not sure that'll do much to help the torn parts."

He gets up and leaves, though he does linger to stand for a moment before Oikawa, still holding his hands, the setter's arms lifted slightly so as not to break the contact until the last possible second. Once he's gone, Oikawa releases a breath he did not know he was holding and realises, somewhat belatedly, that his face feels as hot as Iwaizumi's looked. He buries his face in his shirt before removing it entirely, hearing the rush of water through the pipes in the walls as taps are switched on in the bathroom. Iwaizumi returns to throw a towel at him and frown at his bruised torso, then waits impatiently while Oikawa struggles out of his shorts and underwear. Though only half-assedly trying to keep the towel wrapped around his hips, he somehow succeeds in not dropping it or falling over in the process. Taking his clothes and bundling them under one arm, Iwaizumi shoves him into the bathroom and tells him not to let the bath overflow. Oikawa listens to him tromp off downstairs to the kitchen and washing machine, before turning his attention to the filling bath.

The water is just the right temperature and he can't help a contented sigh when he sinks into it, though his cuts and grazes sting in reaction to the wet heat. It is not the damp, rain-sodden ground of the alleyway, however, and Oikawa allows himself to enjoy it, submerging himself entirely for a few seconds before he breaks the surface again with a gasp, sopping hair sticking to his forehead. He only remembers he had a strip of gauze taped to the side of his head when he sees it floating down towards the other end of the bath, and he grins.

"Iwa-chan," he calls, "I think I should have had the bath_ before_ you stuck bandages all over me. You should have thought of this first."

"Aah?" Iwaizumi pokes his head into the room, if only so as to glower at him. "Oh. Yeah, well, I didn't think about that," the boy sighs.

"I was kind of preoccupied with worry and all."

"Come and wash my hair?" Oikawa teases in an attempt to lessen the atmosphere for them both and assure his friend that he does not have to stress or worry, that he will be all right. Although he is not entirely convinced he will be, he wants to alleviate as many of his best friend's fears as he can.

He is not prepared for Iwaizumi to sigh again, shrug, and actually go along with it. So he ends up sitting in the bath with him perched behind on the side of the tub, his fingers combing and carding this way and that through his dark hair, massaging in some sharp-scented shampoo (it's a little strong for Oikawa's tastes, but he recognises it as the one Iwaizumi uses most often, so he likes it). He can't help but wonder why today is especially surreal, because all of this feels as if it should not be happening - the ache that travels to his very bones dissuades the idea that this is all just some twisted dream. Oikawa's brow furrows but he leans his head back, only wincing a little when Iwaizumi gets shampoo in the cut on his head.

Once washed and dried, Iwaizumi reapplies his gauze and bandages, making grumpy faces at him whenever Oikawa mentions his terrific lack of foresight. There are clean clothes waiting for him on the bed when he retreats to the other room again, clean but laced with the smell of Iwaizumi rather than detergent; something Oikawa finds comforting and oddly nice. Pulling on the large sweater, he leaves the hood up to cover his head and surrounds himself with that familiar musk until Iwaizumi comes in with hot chocolate, kicking the door shut behind him. The dented juice cans have been forgotten for the moment as they sip at the warm drink, and Oikawa is grateful for the way that warmth spreads through his limbs and veins, chasing out the numbing dampness of the alleyway. He feels positively sweltering when he glances at Iwaizumi and feels his face heat up again.

It is strangely quiet compared to the normal banter that typically goes on between them, and were it any other Friday evening, they might be playing games and fighting over who gets to use the more responsive controller, or watching television. Oikawa tends to sprawl flat on his stomach on his bed when he watches television and Iwaizumi sit beside him, or sometimes lies across his back while reading a magazine instead. The silence is odd, and new, Oikawa muses, but he does not find it as uncomfortable or awkward as he thought it might be.

He shifts a little on the bed, back against the wall, and his left knee nudges against Iwaizumi's. "It's tasty," he murmurs under his breath, causing steam to rise from within the depths of his mug, curling in the air. Iwaizumi makes a sound of vague agreement but he does not punch him, nor do anything that makes him want to melt into the wall and vanish. Its surface is not rough against his hand but smooth, and then Iwaizumi, still watching the television, kisses his grazed cheek as if it's nothing.

"Feeling better now?" He leans away again. Oikawa notices that the liquid in his mug is rippling due to his shaking hands, so he figures it must have been more than nothing. His head drops to Iwaizumi's shoulder as he answers with a small nod and a, "Mhmm," and Iwaizumi smiles as though the setter's is infectious and he can't quite stop himself. When Oikawa lifts his head, setting his empty cup aside, he turns so he is facing Iwaizumi properly and casually throws his legs

over his. His hands find a grip on Iwaizumi's upper arms, he tilts his head for him once more time, and he returns the kiss with one of his own. Afterwards, he tells him that he intended to kiss his cheek but missed and hit his mouth instead - they both know this is a lie.

"Is it safe?" Oikawa asks, his voice barely above a whisper, his eyes carefully searching.

Contrary to popular belief, Iwaizumi is capable of being gentle with him. Beyond the boy that yells and throws whatever happens to be in his hand, or kicks out at him when he's got nothing to throw, there is the best friend that has stuck by Oikawa through all life's ups and downs, and dragged him out of a sticky situation more than once before. This will be no different, and this is why Oikawa chooses to keep trusting, even before Iwaizumi nods and whispers back, "Yeah."

A short while later, Iwaizumi is kissing all of his pain away and the bedroom is warmer than ever, heated by their laboured breathing, and his gasps of, "Iwa-chan," and right then, everything is all right. It is 1:13am and Oikawa Tooru is beginning to feel that, even if there are cruel people in the world, it is easier to cope with them when there are people like Iwaizumi Hajime around.

* * *

><p>end.

* * *

><p>I adore Aobajousai boys. that is all.<p>

long time no see! a writing mood at a stupid time and this is what came of it. it began as something and ended as something entirely different, actually. i think i wanted it to go in another direction, butâ€|

'Kusokawa' seems to be a rather rude nickname Iwaizumi has for when he's especially irritated with Oikawa - at least from what i've seen in the fanart? something like 'shitty Oikawa', hahah. good friend, huh.

read it? enjoyed? i adore you, too.

love, riou.

End
file.